

for a future private market in transport. I cannot tell how many road owners there will be, what kind of rules of the road they will set up, how much it will cost per mile, etc. I can say that a competitive market process would lead highway entrepreneurs to seek newer and better ways of providing services to their customers.

Now we come back to the question of safety. Government road managers are doing a terrible job. Consider what transpires when safety is questioned in other forms of transportation to see a corollary. When an airline experiences an accident, passengers think twice before flying that airline and typically it loses customers. Airlines with excellent safety records have discovered that the public is aware of safety and make choices based upon it. An “exploding Pinto” wouldn’t stay on a private road long, nor would reckless drivers and potholes.

I don’t know all the details of how a future free-market road system might work. But I do know that “there has to be a better way.” And it is the free market.

## The Case for a Free Market in Body Parts

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**I**n days of yore, there was no “crisis” in spare body parts. Organ transplants were an utter impossibility, the stuff of science fiction. But nowadays, thanks to the magnificent discoveries and new techniques of modern medicine, it is possible to transplant hearts, livers, kidneys, corneas, and other organs. People who would have been consigned to death, or tenuous and painful lives only a few years ago, can today avail themselves of these medical miracles and lead healthy, productive lives.

However, instead of being the occasion for unrelieved rejoicing, these new breakthroughs have given us a whole host of new problems.

Most important, there is a shortage of body organs suitable for transplant, which has strained medical ethics to the breaking point. For, given the limited supply of donor-organs, our doctors have had to choose which of the many needy recipients shall have this life-giving aid and which shall not. And the doctors have no criteria upon which to base the choice other than their own arbitrary decision.

The difficulty is that our legal-economic system has not kept up with medical technology. The law prohibits people from using the property rights we each have in our own persons. Specifically, it has banned trade, or a marketplace, in live spare body parts.

What? Allow the profit incentive to work in this field? The very idea brings to mind images of grave robbers, Frankenstein monsters, and gangs of "organ thieves" stealing people's hearts, livers, and kidneys, as in Robin Cook's novels.

But let's consider this idea on its own merits. Will a free market increase the number of donors, save lives, and free doctors from the need to pick which people shall be saved and which consigned to a lingering and painful death?

As any first year student in economics can tell us, whenever a good is in short supply, its price is too low. And the case of spare body parts is no exception. In fact, the laws that prohibit a marketplace in human organs have effectively imposed a zero price on these items. At a zero price, we cannot be surprised that the demand for human organs has vastly outstripped the supply.

If the price of human organs were allowed to rise to its market level, barring new technological breakthroughs in artificial organs, there would still be a high demand from people needing an organ transplant to sustain their lives. Thus the immediate effect of a free market would be mainly on the amount supplied.

While it is never possible to fully know how an industry now prohibited by government edict would function, we can anticipate that the major sources would be young healthy people killed in car and other accidents and people who die from diseases such as heart attacks, which leave their other organs undamaged.

If the organ industry were legalized, new firms would spring up, or perhaps insurance companies and hospitals would do the work. These companies or hospitals would offer thousands of dollars to people who met the appropriate medical criteria if they agreed that upon their death their organs would be owned by the firm in question. Then these firms would in turn sell these organs, for a profit, to people in need of a transplant.

In addition these new firms would, as at present, try to obtain consent from the relatives of newly deceased persons for use of their organs. But only under a free market could these firms offer cash incentives for donors, not to mention the chance to save another life.

The effect of programs would be to vastly increase the supply of donor organs. No longer would potential recipients have to make do without transplants. And because the system is based on freedom, those who objected on religious or other grounds would not have to take part.

Nor need we fear that those who engaged in this business would earn "exorbitant" profits. For any such tendency would call forth new entrants into the market, increasing supply even further, and reducing profits to levels which could be earned elsewhere.

Liberty is the answer. If we want to save the American people pain, sorrow, suffering, and tragedy, we will work to institute a free market in body parts.